

MINUTES

MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2008 BOARD OF SELECTMEN SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
TOWN HALL 7:00PM

CALL TO ORDER A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:03 by Chairman Firenze in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall. All Board members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

There were no questions.

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

FY 2007 Town Audit Report - Permanent Audit Committee

Members of the Permanent Audit Committee - including Ernie Fay, Town Treasurer Floyd Carman, and Town Accountant Barbara Hagg - appeared before the Board to present the 2007 Town Audit Report. Mr. Fay explained that an audit is required every three years, but that Belmont does one every year. Belmont benefits from being one of only 13 towns to maintain its AAA bond rating. (Belmont saved \$33,000 in borrowing costs as a result of this rating.) Powers and Sullivan have audited the town for the past three years, and will continue for another 3 years. The Light Department audit report from 12/31/2007 should be completed soon and the report results will be available in May 2008. The 12/31/2006 report seemed fine and the Light Department received a rating of AA-. The findings of the Town Audit Report was nothing significant was found..

The Board acknowledged the Committee for their work.

ACTION BY CONSENT

Reserve Fund Transfer Request - Belmont Board of Health

The Hazardous Waste account was under-budgeted, and the Board of Health requests a reserve fund transfer of \$5,000 in additional funding.

The Board moved: To recommend to the Warrant Committee a reserve fund transfer of \$5,000.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Approval of Board of Selectmen Minutes - January 28, 2008 and February 4, 2008

The Board moved: To approve Minutes from the above meetings. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

ACTION BY WRITING

Letter of Commendation to Library regarding One Book One Belmont

A Letter of Commendation was read aloud by Chairman Firenze.

The Board moved: To approve the Letter of Commendation. The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Sign Annual Town Election Warrant

The Board moved: To sign the warrant. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

(Noted precinct voting location changes for Precincts 3 and 7.)

Approval of Town Administrator's Employment Contract

The Board moved: To approve the employment contract.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0). (Contract signed by the Board of Selectmen as well as Mr. Younger.)

BCBA's Request to Hold Annual Belmont Town Day, Saturday, May 17, 2008 with a rain date of May 18

The Board moved: To hold Town Day on May 17, 2008 with a rain date of May 18, 2008.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Boosters Club's Request to Hold Annual Fiesta Show Carnival, June 9 - June 15

The Board moved: To approve the Carnival request.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

2008 License Renewal for Used Car Dealer's Class II - TNT Service Corp.

The Board moved: To approve renewal of the license as requested.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

ACTION BY CONSENT (continued)

Approval to Appoint Auxiliary Police Officers and Special Police Officer

Police Chief McLaughlin appeared before the Board to request approval for the appointments of Ronald Hurley and Christopher Murphy to the Auxiliary Police. Both individuals have completed the necessary training requirements.

The Board moved: To approve the appointments. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT (continued)

Belmont Police Station Feasibility Study Committee Report

The Police Station Feasibility Committee appeared before the Board to present the results of its study. Chair Bill Lovallo informed the Board that after having narrowed down the potential sites to three: 1) the combined light company and police station, 2) the Library site, and 3) the Video plus site, and having studied the parking (69 spaces) and space (27,410 SF) requirements along with cost considerations (construction, demolition, renovation, etc.) the Library site seems to be the best choice. A firing range would need to be added on the third floor but otherwise the exterior of the building would remain intact, while the interior would need to be gutted.

The Board discussed the fact that the Library option is the most cost effective and that it supports the library - as the trustees would like to build a new building across the street. Chairman Firenze noted that the cost savings of not having to relocate both the library and the police station during construction, if each were rebuilt on the same site could amount to as much as \$10 million.

Belmont Center Planning Group Report

The Belmont Center Planning Group appeared before the Board to present the final draft of its report. Highlights of the report include physical improvements, zoning changes, and a look at key development sites. Input from the community is included in their recommendations as well as input from the Center's businesses, which are in agreement with the recommendations from the report. The Planning Group has applied for a state grant to receive guidelines in developing a standard for the Center with regard to furniture and a furnishings palette (benches, light fixtures, trash barrels, trees). The next step for the Group is to meet with the Planning Board regarding zoning and implementation issues.

The Board requested that each Selectman receive a copy of the report, and the Board expressed its desire to move forward to the next steps (finalizing the report and receiving feedback from the Planning Board).

Government Structure Review

Warrant Committee member Ralph Jones and Selectman Solomon have created a draft of a process for reviewing Belmont's government structure. Their first recommendation is for the Board of Selectmen to appoint a 9 member "Government Structure Review Committee". They have recommended 7 people to serve on that committee, which leaves two open positions to be appointed. The committee's mandate would be to provide a report which highlights possible mechanisms for changing town government structure (Charter Commission, Town Meeting, Home Rule petition, and examples from other communities.) The committee will get input from public meetings, and Town Administrator Younger would act as a consultant to the committee. The committee would submit a report to the Selectmen in about 6 months.

Chair Firenze expressed his desire to see the remaining two positions filled with persons who have some experience from other communities or institutions and can offer a fresh, outside perspective.

Mr. Jones and Selectman Solomon will meet again with the Board in two weeks to discuss the membership and the progress of the Government Structure Review Committee.
Budget Discussions - Health Insurance

Health insurance consultant Sue Shillue of Cook and Company and Human Resources Director Diane Crimmins appeared before the Board to review the status of the self-funding insurance program and to make recommendations for rate changes for FY09. Ms. Shillue presented a cash flow summary with the most recent data through February 2008. She also consulted with Harvard Pilgrim regarding their recommendations for premium rates. A rate increase of 3.5% (which is more conservative than what Harvard Pilgrim recommended) is the figure that Ms. Shillue is recommending to the Board. This is significantly lower than the 7% increase which had been assumed in the proposed FY09 budget.

The Board moved: To set the FY09 health insurance rates at a 3.5% increase for all plans and subscribers following consultation from the Insurance Advisory Committee on March 26, 2008. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).
Budget Discussions - School Committee

Members of the School Committee (SC) then appeared before the Board to present the School Committee's override sequencing proposal as well as to update the Board on their efforts to close the school's budget gap of a little over \$400,000.

Committee member Scott Stratford outlined his three-year sequencing proposal plan which puts a \$4.5M operating override on the ballot this spring, assumes a Wellington debt exclusion in November, and a \$2.5M roads override in Spring of 2009. This multi-year plan allows for \$2.5M to be taken from free cash reserves this spring to address the roads and allows for some money from the override to take care of certain capital projects. Mr. Stratford added that the Warrant Committee had concerns about the \$4.5M number.

Chairman Firenze stated that he is more comfortable with the original sequencing order of addressing the roads this spring and the operating budget next spring. Especially, he added, if the "draconian cuts" are deemed unnecessary, which assumes the SC can identify additional funding to restore things like instrumental music and the library aides. Chair Firenze said it was unfair to ask for an override now, if the budget gap can be closed. Selectman Solomon voiced concern that by continuing to postpone the operating override, credibility is being lost. He advised that a voter education program should begin now, in anticipation of a significant operating override for FY10. Selectman Leclerc stated he is pleased with the efforts to close the gap, and offered that the timing is right for the roads.

SC Chair John Bowe said that the SC has a proposal to cobble together from various places enough one-time revenue to come very close to closing the gap. He did not provide specific numbers, but pointed out that under the proposal, the \$150,000 currently allocated from free cash for the OPEB trust fund would need to be reallocated to the operating budget - with the appropriate town/school split - in order to close the gap.

The Board supported this reallocation of OPEB money.

The Board moved: To recommend to the Warrant Committee the reallocation for FY09 of \$150,000 of free cash reserves presently allocated to the OPEB trust fund, to be used in the operating budget with the appropriate town/school split. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Town Administrator's Report Mr. Younger reported on the following items:

- " A "pilot program" for a street cleaning sweep was successful.
- " Next Saturday (3/22), the police department will run an auto glass etching program.
- " The groundbreaking ceremony of the Senior Center takes place next Tuesday, March 25 at the Beech Street site.
- " The Parking group has researched the issue of relocating the taxi stand and concluded that no change is needed at this time.
- " The Conservation Commission is working on efforts to promote the community gardens at Rock Meadow.

Chairman Firenze noted that the VFW declined the Media Center's offer of \$30,000 a year to rent the upstairs portion of the building. The Media Center is currently looking at other options. The Board expressed concern that the VFW still does not have a plan in place to meet its financial obligations in order to remain viable at its present location.

OTHER

" The Board has received an official request from Chris Starr for the discontinuation of a portion of Horne Road. The Board needs to hold a public hearing on this request in its capacity as the Board of Survey.

The Board moved: To schedule a hearing regarding the possible discontinuation of a section of Horne from Common St.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

" Mr. Conti has drafted a letter to the citizens who attended the school budget hearing on March 1, 2008.

The Board moved: To send the above letter out.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board moved: To enter executive session to discuss litigation and not return to open session.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0). The Board entered executive session at 10:40 PM.

(During executive session, one substantive motion was made and passed unanimously. The Board adjourned at 10:44 PM.)

Administrator

Thomas G. Younger, Town